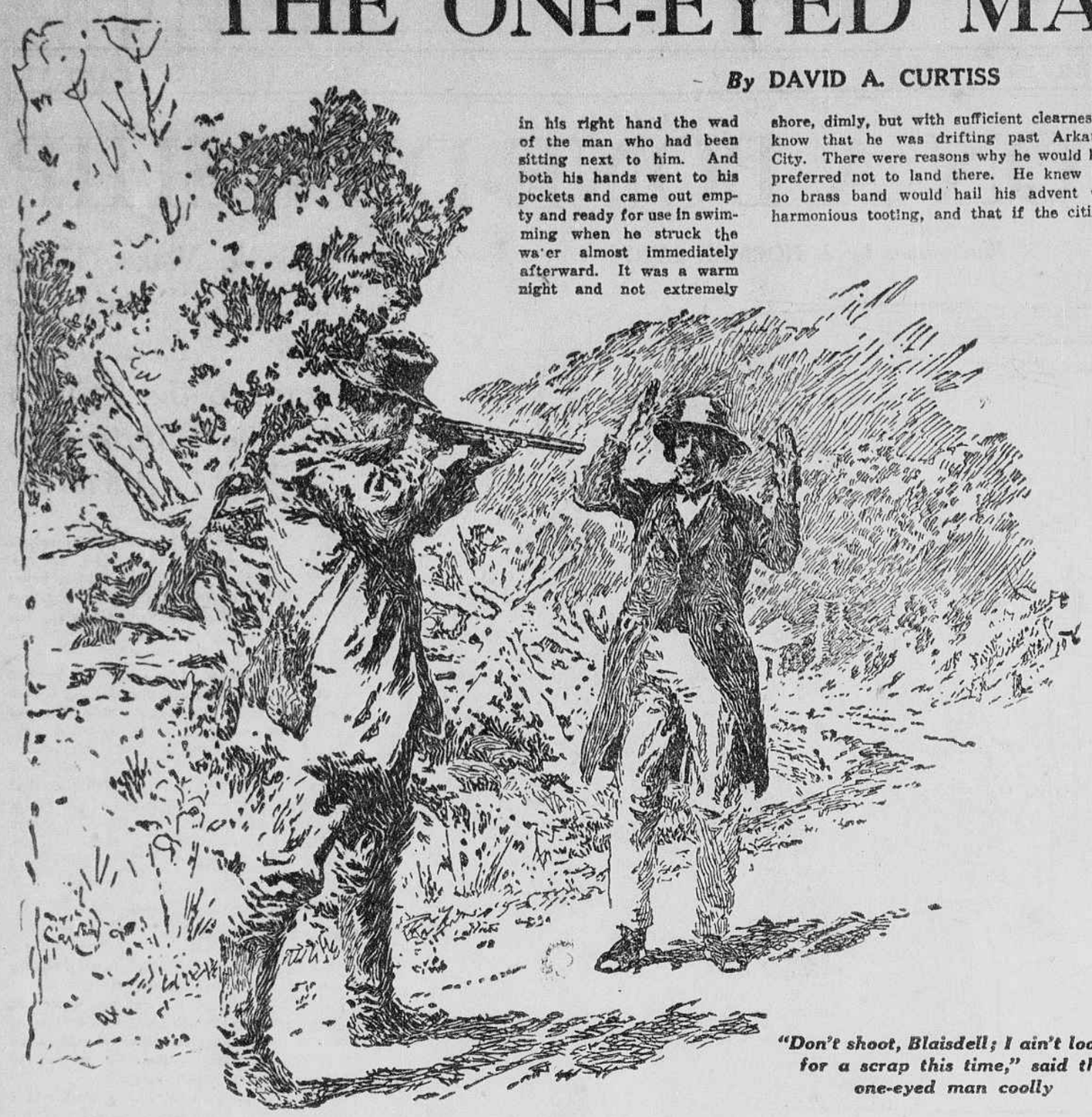
THE ONE-EYED MAN STEPS LIVELY

By DAVID A. CURTISS

Illustrations by WILL CRAWFORD



"Don't shoot, Blaisdell; I ain't lookin' for a scrap this time," said the one-eyed man coolly

Newspaper readers of twenty-five years ago will remember the "Old Man Greenhut" stories, which ran in that weekly surprise package, "The New York Sun" of the days of Dana. They were marvels of poker stories, with the Mississippi Valley as their setting. David A. Curtis wrote them. In this story of the "One-Eyed" Gambler the reader is again taken to Old Man Greenhut's and to a poker session which was no mere "friendly game." Let Mr. Curtis tell it.

BEFORE the Creole Belle bust her biler, a mile or so above the Arkansas City landing, she was known as one of the crack boats among the famous floating palaces on which travelers at that time greatly enjoyed going up and down the Mississippi. Railroads were not. Men reckoned time by weeks, esteeming minutes and even hours of no more value than the small coins that were not then recognized as currency in that part of the world. Travel was therefore a luxury to be enjoyed, not a mad scramble to get elsewhere.

Pretty much everything that was then known of luxury, including the playing of poker, was provided on these boats for those who had the money to pay for a first-class passage, so that it was not surprising in the least that a poker game was in progress in the main saloon of the Creole Belle at the time when the explosion happened.

Neither was it surprising to any one else in the saloon that the one-eyed man was one of the players in the game. Little was known about him, nor did any care to know about him, more than that he was easily one of the foremost of the famous group of adventurers who had recently devoted their utmost energy and talent to the task of putting poke into the game of poker. They were, perhaps, the best poker players the world has ever seen and it was owing to their efforts at improvement that the old original "straight poker" was gradually developed into the more modern game of draw, which its devotees still believe to be the greatest game ever devised.

At that time it was much played on the river boats. The alluring charm which the old game always presented to the venturesome had been greatly enhanced by the addition of the draw, and later by the discovery that a straight flush was harder to get than four of a kind and therefore a more valuable hand. Then many learned to play who never played before, and those who had been players played the more. It seemed as if the entire male population of the Mississippi Valley had come to look on the holding of a straight flush as the most desirable happening in life. What the general public was gradually learning was that some of the more gifted players were able to hold almost any hand on their own deal that might seem advisable to them. And One Eye, as he was commonly called, was undeniably gifted, whatever else might be said of him.

When the explosion broke up the game on the Creole Belle he was professionally engaged, but even he lost interest in the game on the moment. He was noted for the accuracy of his judgment as to the importance of an emergency, and his judgment told him that the instant in hand was the only one he could utilize. Another thing for which he was noted was promptitude, and in that fleeting moment he demonstrated, whether consciously or instinctively, the value of the training by which he had made his fingers so nimble that no eye could follow their motion.

His wad was in his left hand and he was in the act of skinning off a bill to put in the pot, but although he went up in the air actually without warping, he carried with him in his right hand the wad of the man who had been sitting next to him. And both his hands went to his pockets and came out empty and ready for use in swimming when he struck the water almost immediately afterward. It was a warm night and not extremely dark. He suffered, therefore, no great discomfort as he clung to his timber, and as his eyes became used to the gloom, he was able to see that among the scattered wreckage a number of other people were struggling in the water. Some of them were shouting for help, but to these he paid no special attention till he saw a woman some little distance away from him holding on to a wholly inadequate scrap of flotsam and shrieking in terror.

For a moment he smiled sardonically. Then his look became one of annoyance. Then, muttering a sullen oath, he dropped off his support and swam over to the woman, approaching her from behind. Catching her by no means gently, so that she could not cling to him, he towed her back to the timber he had appropriated to his own use and helped her to climb upon it so that she could lie at full length in temporary safety. Paying no further attention to her, he swam away, still swearing as if disgusted, either by the situation or by his own act. It was evident that he was no ladies' man.

Being thus, as it seemed, indifferent to the society of the fair sex, he now showed himself equally careless of any other, for without any further attention to his immediate surroundings he struck out for shore.

This change of purpose came from his having seen a few straggling houses on the west shore, dimly, but with sufficient clearness to know that he was drifting past Arkansas City. There were reasons why he would have preferred not to land there. He knew that no brass band would hail his advent with harmonious tooting, and that if the citizens should welcome him with fireworks they would probably utilize him as a target.

Even in his extremity, which he acknowledged to himself without reserve, he felt that he must laugh inwardly, and he did so, recalling the reasons for the hostility that made it really dangerous for him to land at that particular spot. He had been there several times and had earned the hatred fairly.

In Arkansas City, as all the Valley knew, was a saloon known as Old Man Greenhut's, which was the headquarters of a group of men as noted as he was himself for the extraordinary success they commonly had in playing poker. So great was their fame that they seldom went abroad to play, preferring to wait for the visits of those who should happen in unexpectedly, or who might vainglorioously seek to humble their pride, which was also great. As their fame had grown, the number of such bold adventurers had increased, but of all these latter One Eye was the only successful one. Each time he had been there he had proved his superiority in the finesse of the game, whether legitimate or illegitimate, and each time he had evaded the vengeance they sought for the trickery they detected too late. He realized that it would be worse than useless for him to look for justice in Arkansas City. He would be too certain of getting it.

Nevertheless, as he reviewed the question, drifting down the river, he decided that it would be better for him to land where he would find population, even though it was hostile, than in a howling wilderness.

Before he had gone far he halted suddenly and threw up his hands. The man who had come in sight at a turn in the road had a shotgun in his hand, and, recognizing the one-eyed man instantly, had raised it to his shoulder.

"Don't shoot, Blaisdell; I ain't lookin' for a scrap this time," said the one-eyed man coolly.

"Well, I'm al'ays lookin' fo' one when yo'all is anywhere 'round," was the equally cool reply, "but I cain't shoot a man with his hands up. What be yo' lookin' fo'?"

"Boots an' a boat. I was gwine to N' O'leans on the Creole Belle when she blowed up, an' I swum asho'. All's I really want is to git abo'd the next boat down, but I'd kind o' hate to go barefoot."

"When was this?" asked Blaisdell skeptically. When the "One-Eyed Man" made statements people often hunted around for proofs.

"Sometime last night—I couldn't say just when—they was a game on."

"That mought ha' been what we uns heer'd, 'long about 2 o'clock," said Blaisdell, half convinced, "but they ain't nothin' nor nobody done come asho' 's fur 's I know. 'Pears like they'd ha' been somepin, if they was a boat blowed up."

"I reckon them what wan't drownded must ha' drifted on down," said One Eye, unconcernedly. "I done drifted consid'able my own self afo' I made the sho'."

"Mebbe so," Blaisdell admitted, doubtfully.

The story was not an impossible one, and as One Eye told it he was forced to recognize it as even plausible, but he had heard plausible statements from the same source before, and he was of two minds.

He was not the only citizen of Arkansas City who had declared the intention of shooting One Eye on sight, and the impulse to do it was by no means lacking. The obvious and simple thing was to pull his trigger.

Even in Arkansas City, however, it was not regarded as polite to kill a man who stood with his hands up, and in some things Blaisdell was punctilious. If the other's attitude had been hostile he would undoubtedly have shot without parley, but for One Eye to assume an attitude of submission was not only unprecedented, it was more or less bewildering. He therefore hesitated.

Moreover, he had a strong yearning to play poker again with the one-eyed man. Regarding himself and being regarded by many other people as the best poker player in the Mississippi Valley, he had been humiliated by the outcome of the several encounters in the past wherein One Eye had either outwitted or outplayed the players in Old Man Greenhut's saloon.

Both men understood the situation perfectly and each knew that the other understood. They eyed each other keenly while Blaisdell still hesitated, and for some moments neither spoke.

Then One Eye said, with a somewhat quizzical smile: "I reckon yo' all 'd a heap druther play poker nor yo' would to fight, mo' special as I ain't puttin' up no fight. My hands is in the air an' yo' all c'n take my knife away f'm me afo' yo' put down yo' gun. Then yo' c'n make yo own 'rangements fo' a game. I'm agree'ble to anythin'. If yo' says fo' to play into Greenhut's place I won't make no 'jections p'vidin' yo' all takes me thar as yo' pris'ner. I reckon they won't be no cold-blooded slaughter. On'y I'd like fo' to buy a pair o' boots, first off. I ain't been used to go barefoot, fo' a long time now."

Jim Blaisdell almost gasped. If he had not been so good a poker player as he certainly was the astounding impudence of the man would have taken his breath away entirely.

Then he, too, smiled. It was, of course, a bluff. Very well—he would call the bluff.

"Suits me," he said, briefly, and approaching he possessed himself of the knife mentioned. Then, shouldering his gun with no further thought of the partridges he had gone forth to shoot, he said; I reckon yo' all c'n buy them boots all right, to the sto'." And the two started toward the town.

There was no conversation between them on the way, nor while the boots were being purchased, nor was there anything said for a moment or two when they entered Old Man Greenhut's saloon. There was, however, a precipitate show of activity when the inmates of the little barroom realized who the incomers were. Old Man Greenhut grabbed up his bung starter from the corner where he kept it and started around the end of the bar. Jake Winterbottom's hand slid quickly to the vest pocket in which he always carried a derringer. Sam Pearsall reached around to his hip pocket and Joe Bassett jumped to his feet, drawing a revolver as he rose, with the evident intent to use it.

But Blaisdell raised a warning hand.

"Time!" he exclaimed. "This yer is my deal, an' this man is my prisoner. They ain't nothin' gwine to be did, right away, not 'thouten Greenhut p'poses to put him on trial, him bein' justice o' the peace. If they's gwine to be co't p'ceedin's I'll 'per as counsel fo' the deceased."

"If they's any p'ceedins did, it'll be afo' the Coroner," said Bassett, with savage fury, advancing with his gun still pointed, but One Eye, saying nothing, had promptly thrown his hands up again, and even Bassett hesitated.

But the old man's bungstarter was still aflourish.

"They ain't no call fo' no trial," he said angrily. "I p'nounce the prisoner guilty, an' Gor have mercy on yo' soul when we uns gets through."

He would have struck if Blaisdell had not intervened. He, too, was angry, but he spoke quietly.

"I was a sayin' how this was my deal," he said. "I done brung this man hyar on business, an' that's gwine to be did, first off. I don't care a cuss what's did later."

"Business" was a magic word in Old Man Greenhut's ears, and he knew it. The old man immediately brandished his bungstarter in the other direction.

"Jim has the flo' an' they won't nobody interrupt while he states it," he decided.

So Blaisdell explained the matter, showing the confiscated knife and telling the circumstances, declaring further with great emphasis that all the powers of the air were not going to be allowed to stand in the way of his sitting in with One Eye at the poker table, even if it was to be a two-handed game.

"That's diff'rent," said the old man after listening. "Bygones is to be c'nsidered bygones, fo' a spell, under them circumstants. If the gent has a wad it c'n be tooken legimate afo' the previous order of business is took up. Question is, did he fetch his wad along when he done left the boat?"

For answer to this One-Eye drew from his right-hand pocket the bunch of bills he had gathered up incidentally when rising from the table the night before. What he had in the other pocket he did not show.

His reputation for nerve was well estab-

(Continued on page four)

CLEMENCE'S HOMECOMING

By JEAN BERTHEROY

Translated by William L. McPherson

CLEMENCE was getting ready, as she did each day, to go and give her lessons in the Parc Monceau quarter, when she received a dispatch whose contents she guessed in advance:

"Mademoiselle—Don't take the trouble to come to-day. Mamma is giving us a holiday. We shall expect you to-morrow at the usual hour.
MARGUERITE AND LUCY."

Clemence tore up the sheet and threw it into the fireplace. She looked about her at the shabby room, dark and cold, whose only window opened on a court in which there was scarcely any sunlight. What was she going to do with her day? Her life was planned with a view to this work outside, which gave her something in the way of distraction in addition to bringing her a livelihood. She set out early in the morning, took luncheon with her pupils and came back only toward evening, a little tired, but satisfied at having accomplished her duty.

Why had Clemence chosen this difficult and ungrateful profession? She could have remained at her home in the country and spent her days there without worry. She was thinking at this moment of all that she had left down there, in the big village, lying at the foot of the mountain, and cut in two by the river with its placid current. She had grown up among people with simple manners in the house of her father, who was a pottery worker. Her mother had died long ago and she replaced her as manager in the household. Then suddenly the ambition had come to her to enlarge the circle of her acquaintances. She had worked to pass her examinations, and one autumn evening she had left the village, drawn toward the glitter of Paris.

How was she going to spend the day? She knew few people in the city and those whom she could have gone to see were workers like herself, tied to a daily task. She felt herself alone, abandoned and forgotten. The rain which was falling augmented her feeling of isolation and seemed to draw an impenetrable curtain between her and the rest of the world. She drew a chair toward the window and began to knit.

As she wielded the needles she thought of the useful object on which her hands were working. This woolen piece was for her father. This long scarf would wind about the potter's neck and perhaps protect him against some dangerous cold. The old man was easily chilled. The wind often whistled keenly along the base of the mountains. Clemence imagined herself again in those far-off surroundings, and the illusion brought a smile to her face. Yes, she would finish the scarf to-day and to-morrow she would send it.

Nevertheless, when the hour arrived for luncheon she put down her knitting to go out. In this immense Paris she knew but a single restaurant—a modest one in which she had stopped the day she arrived in the capital. It was alongside the railroad station. She went there. She would be less lost there than anywhere else and less separated from her native village, since she had only to cross the street to find herself in the great iron-beamed hall from which the trains started for the city nearest her home.

In the restaurant there was but one place vacant, at a little table in the back of the room. Scarcely had she taken her seat there when, on lifting her eyes, she recognized a familiar face opposite her. And already a friendly hand was stretched out toward hers.

"Good-day, Mademoiselle Clemence. Really, it is an unexpected pleasure."

"You have come to Paris, too?" she asked.

"Oh, not for long! Paris doesn't suit me. There are too many people here. I feel stifled. I have brought some merchandise for my employer, and, after having delivered it, I will go back to-morrow evening. But you—you have completely forgotten the way home, haven't you?"

She blushed. She was at the same time happy and inwardly embarrassed. This tall, honest fellow, with a gentle glance, had formerly been an admirer of hers. But she was already possessed with the desire to make a position for herself. She had pushed from her path this obscure suitor. To-day he seemed to her enveloped in a sort of aureole.

"How is my father?" she asked at once.

"Only so-so. He is getting old, and at his age it is not very pleasant to be left all alone."

She blushed again.

"I have been making something for him this morning," she said. "I shall soon finish it. Would you be willing to take it back with you?"

"Certainly, if you want me to," he answered.

They were silent, certain that the same thought filled their minds. Their glances no longer met.

He raised his head and said in a low voice:

"Why not go back to him yourself? Are you no longer free to do as you please?"

"Free! I am only too free," she said.

And presently, fearing to make any further revelations, she added:

"So it is agreed? To-morrow evening I will be on the platform at the station and will give you the little package."

"It is agreed," he repeated.

The meal was finished. They separated. Clemence returned to her room. On the way back she did not notice that it was raining. It seemed to her that a burden had fallen from her shoulders and that she had won back the lightness of spirit that she had lost. She felt herself watched over by Happiness—happiness with a humble visage and discreet and faithful hands.

Next evening, as she was about to enter the station, she saw afar the companion of her childhood, who was waiting for her.

"I have bought your ticket," he announced in his tranquil voice.

"Thank you," she said, simply.

She took his arm. That seemed to her natural and willed from all eternity by the mysterious law of Fate.

AN EFFICIENCY ENGINEER DROPS IN

By JAMES J. MONTAGUE

Illustrations by MERLE JOHNSON

I DON'T know how he got into the office, but there he was.

He leaned against the door jamb and regarded me with disapproval.

"I can see right way that you need me," he said.

"Are you a bootlegger?" I inquired. "If so I have no Liberty bonds left to give you in exchange for your wares."

He smiled pityingly.

"I am not a bootlegger," he said, "nor a life insurance solicitor, nor a book agent, nor a bill collector. I have come to help you!"

"In that case," I said, "perhaps you will lend me fifteen dollars."

He lifted his palms, outward, in deprecation.

"To lend you fifteen dollars would be to pauperize you," he said. "I will show you how to make fifteen thousand—even fifteen *hundred* thousand dollars."

"I am at your service," I told him.

"You," he said, "are a time waster! I can see that by the way you use your typewriter. I do not know what your are writing, but I can show you how to write in ten minutes what, unaided, you would require an hour to write. That is a saving of fifty minutes. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that your time is worth ten cents a minute, that would be a gain to your pocketbook of fifty cents an hour, or five dollars for a ten-hour day, or thirty dollars a week or" ——

"You ought to do it in a second and a half"

"But," I objected, "a saving of thirty dollars a week wouldn't amount to fifteen hundred thousand in quite a little while."

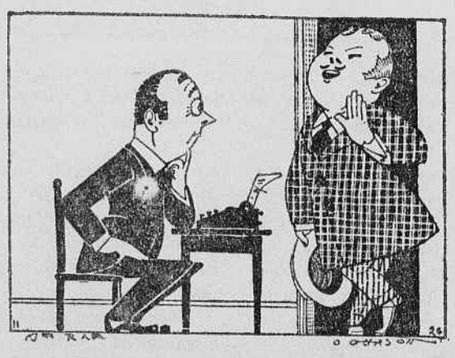
"I can save you time and effort in other directions. How many minutes do you devote each morning to tying your necktie and lacing your shoes?"

"To tell you the truth I never had anybody time me while I was thus employed. Perhaps a minute and a half."

"You ought to do it in *a second* and a half. That would be six hundred per cent saved. Allowing that your time is worth, altogether, ten dollars a day I could, if you adopted my system, make it worth *sixty dollars a day*, merely by effecting economies in dressing and eating. How many bites do you take at a baked potato?"

"I never counted."

"But *I* have. That is, I have counted the bites taken by men of your height, weight and nervous force. You take thirteen bites. Speed that up as it should be speeded up and you will get away with a potato in eight bites, and the rate of biting will be increased to eighteen per minute instead of twelve, which would make a saving of"——



"I am not a bootlegger," he said, "nor an insurance agent"

"But, hold on. I'm not earning anything when I eat my dinner. That is just extra time for which nobody is paying me."

"True, as things are now. But you could sell that time if you had it, if you understood the value of marketing. I don't know what your business is, but that makes no difference. Time is of the utmost importance to you, and every minute of it is saleable and at a high figure if it is properly utilized. How many heat units do you employ in a half-mile walk?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"I have. You employ 88,563.08, and you should employ but 24,693.51. Those heat units should be expended after you have reached your place of employment. You could be using them now at your typewriter. I can see that what you are doing is taking too much of your time and too much of your energy mental and physical. Adopt the system I have come here to talk to you about, and the time you are now spending would be of real value to you.

"But," I said, "I am writing a letter to a man I am trying to get to join a golf foursome Tuesday."

"Then you oughtn't to be writing it. You ought to be writing a business letter. Well written business letters bring in orders. They should, however, be mostly form letters, as it requires too much time to think up new ones for each customer. You will find that the letters I have samples of here will pull more business than any you could possibly invent, and they can be written sixty-seven at a time instead of one. You will admit that you want business, won't you?"

"No," I said, "I don't want any more business; that is, not for myself at least, and I couldn't get any more business if I wanted it. I would like more money, of course, but I fail to see how by increasing my output of letters I could bring it in."

"That's because you are one of those hidebound reactionary business men who will learn nothing. Let me take you in hand. Let me show you how to sell goods all over the country, to rake in the dollars by the thousands instead of by the hundreds; to build the biggest business in the world, and to be known as a hard-headed, hard-boiled business man who is out after every cent and who means to get it."

"It wouldn't help," I sighed. "Not in my business, any way."

"What is your business?" he demanded.

"I," I replied, "am a clergyman."

"Speed up and you'll get away in eight bites"